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NEWS RELEASE

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Rhode Island to Receive \$2.7-Million Federal Grant for Reading Instruction

PROVIDENCE - Senator Jack Reed has announced that the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) has received approval for a \$2.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to finance a reading-instruction program for pupils in the early grades.

The grant is part of the Reading First program, which was established by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Its purpose "is to ensure that all children in America learn to read well by the end of third grade."

"We're very excited to receive this grant," said Peter McWalters, commissioner of elementary and secondary education, at a meeting today (Wednesday, Oct. 8) with Senator Reed at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Elementary School, on Broad Street, Providence. "Reading is fundamental to academic success. Over the past five years, out elementary-school reading scores have been steadily increasing. In awarding Rhode Island this grant, the U.S. Department of Education has given us timely support for our ongoing efforts to improve the reading skills of all of our children."

Rhode Island will receive \$2.7 million in Reading First funds this year, and the state expects to receive \$16 million over the next six years. The funds will be used to purchase scientifically based reading materials, to develop assessments, and to establish professional-development programs to make sure that teachers are using research-based instructional methods as they teach reading.

The goal is to create a preventive model, catching reading problems at an early stage and helping students before they fall behind their grade level in reading. Support, supplementary materials, and interventions will be offered to children with reading difficulties.

Up to 24 schools will receive the funds over the next six years. Teachers in the schools that receive Reading First funds will participate in summer institutes. Reading First coaches will be assigned to each of the schools, and there will be ongoing professional development throughout the school year. The Reading First schools will then serve as a model for reading instruction for the rest of the state.

Districts will be notified later this month about the application process. The plan is for the grant recipients to be selected in time for funds to be distributed at the beginning of 2004.

